



## Chicago's Strange and Haunted History

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# Chicago history, rock music, pagan worship and Svengoolie?

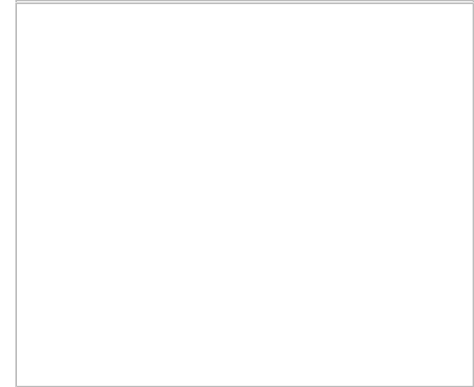


By [Ray Johnson](#), Monday at 4:43 pm



Resurrection Larry "Pink Floyd vs. Led Zeppelin in a bar fight on Mars"

OK...So I was asking myself how I was going to combine Chicago history, rock music, pagan worship and [Svengoolie](#) all in one short article. Luckily for me, Jim Lang, founding member of "[Resurrection Larry](#)" made my job a bit easier. I first made contact with Jim via the love/hate relationship I like to call Facebook. I'm pretty sure that it was the unique name of his band and the obvious pun with regard to the south side hitchhiking spirit known as "[Resurrection Mary](#)" that caught my attention.



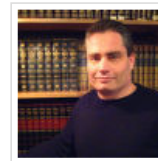
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## Ray Johnson

Ray Johnson is a former criminal investigator in Du Page County, Illinois. He was born in Chicago and has spent his entire life in the Chicagoland area. He is a graduate of The University of Illinois at Chicago and has taught College Classes in Criminal Justice at the College of Du Page in Glen Ellyn as well as lecturing on Chicago folklore and history and teaching adult education classes on historical research techniques. He is a life-long fan of Chicago history and especially the stranger side of Chicago's history such as Chicago area urban legends, folklore and haunts. His first published work on the subject is "Chicago's Haunt Detective" by Schiffer Publishing out of Atglen, PA which was published in July 2011. His website for the stranger side of Chicago is [HauntDetective.com](#). He is currently the Chicago

Jim was kind enough to invite me to a recent performance of theirs at the [Brauerhouse](#) in Lombard where I had a chance to meet the other members of the band; Hank Marquardt, Kathy Marini, and Dave Fornalsky. I also noticed that Jim was wearing his signature [Svengoolie](#) t-shirt. I believe that every performance photo I have seen of Jim he is wearing some version of Rich Koz's alter ego. At that point I knew I was going to like them before they played a single note. Jim told me that he has worn a version of [Svengoolie](#) at every performance with the exception of one but the band had to hit the stage before I could ask which one.

On their [Facebook page](#) they say that the Chicago Tribune has described their music as "Pink Floyd vs. Led Zeppelin in a bar fight on Mars". I have to say that the description is close but I would say it would be more like a combo between Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and Midnight Syndicate. Either way a fan of rock would love the show.


Jim, being a fan of the stranger side of Chicago asked me what I knew about "[The Tonic Room](#)" at 2447 N. Halsted in Chicago. He had said that he heard it had some connection to witchcraft in the past. I admit I didn't know much about it but after looking into the history of the establishment found out it did have somewhat of a strange history.

Starting in January of 1969 what is now The Tonic Room was known as "El-Sabarum". Frederic De'Arechaga was the owner of the shop which catered to those interested in various facets of the occult. De'Arechaga considered himself to be a "Pontifus Maximus" in the Sabaeen Religious Order and within the confines of the store which sold amulets, herbs, incense, goat hooves, voodoo beads, togas, jet stones to absorb bad spells and ceremonial daggers was his temple of Saba. In the book, "Popular Witchcraft - Straight from the Witch's Mouth", University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, author Jack Fritscher interviewed De'Arechaga at "El-Sabarum" on September 20, 1969. According to the interview, De'Arechaga considered himself to be a "hereditary witch" receiving his gift from his mother who oversaw the Sabaeen Order from a location at 3221 Sheffield. He told a Chicago Tribune reporter that he had opened the shop in an effort to continue his mother's work after her death. A 1970 Chicago Tribune article written by Mary Daniels described De'Arechaga's temple as being in the back of the store and containing Grecian pillars, red gauzy veils, cushions and cooing pigeons.

He chose the name "El-Sabarum" because he said that it meant "of many gods". He considered himself to be of the "Old Religion" and that Christians, Jews, and Muslims merely practiced degenerated versions of the "Old Religion" He even viewed Satanists as merely degenerates of the Catholic faith. De'Arechaga did not see a reason to delineate between "black" or "white" witches and the idea that there was good or bad in magic was something dreamed up mainly by the monotheistic religions. However, he did make somewhat of an ominous comment during Fritscher's interview when he stated, "In my store I cease to sell certain things when another shop begins to handle the item. I do this out of respect to the other person. I thank the gods that other people have done this in turn for me. Some, however, purposely imitate what I do because they've got to get in

area representative of the Association of Professional Genealogists and runs a historical research business from his other website, [HistoryCop.com](#)


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
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
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
  
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on the bandwagon. They have no respect. They usually don't know what they're doing and they usually close up quite suddenly and quite mysteriously --ha!-- if you know what I mean."

After the release of the movie, "The Exorcist" on December 26, 1973, De'Arechaga told a Tribune reporter that he was being "plagued by an adverse public image" He reported that Christians have tried to exorcise the store out of the neighborhood, people will cross themselves passing by the store or will even cross the street to avoid passing too close. He told the reporter that dogs would actually stop and walk carefully around the blue pentacles that he had painted on the sidewalk outside the store and that dead cats have been thrown through his front windows.

Sometime after that article was published in 1974, De'Arechaga left the Sabaeon Order, changed his name to Orun after he converted to Santeria and started worshiping the god Obatala. Strangely enough this seems quite fitting for an establishment named "[The Tonic Room](#)" since according to Yoruban mythical lore, Obatala was the actual creator of human beings and human beings were created with flaws because Obatala was drunk on palm wine when he created us! Well at least I have someone to blame for any typos in this article.

Regardless of whether you are a Christian, Muslim, Jew, Pagan or Atheist you should check out Resurrection Larry at "[The Tonic Room](#)" on Saturday, March 31, 2012 (773) 248-8400. Doors open at 8pm. You can check out [Resurrection Larry on their Facebook Page](#) where you can sample a number of their songs and check out their wall. By the way in case you want to get Jim Lang a drink that night, the martini is his drink of choice!

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